



PSC NEWS

Missouri Public Service Commission

Contact: Kevin Kelly

Phone: (573) 751-9300

Governor Office Building, Suite 900

FY-04-172

COLD WEATHER RULE TASK FORCE TO HOLD FIRST PUBLIC MEETING IN KANSAS CITY

Jefferson City (April 5, 2004)---A task force named by the Missouri Public Service Commission to examine possible programs for improving long term energy affordability for those in need of assistance, and to propose any immediate changes to the Commission's Cold Weather Rule that may provide short term help, will hold its first local public meeting in **Kansas City** this month.

The public meeting is scheduled to start at 6:30 pm on April 20, 2004. The meeting will be held in the Water Services Headquarters Building, 4800 East 63rd Trafficway. Those wishing to attend the meeting are advised to park on the north side of the building and enter through the doors nearest the parking lot.

"We believe it is time to again evaluate the Cold Weather Rule in light of the fact that wholesale natural gas prices have more than doubled since 2000 and customer heating bills may have been 15 to 25 percent higher this winter than they were in the winter of 2002-2003," stated PSC Chairman Steve Gaw. "In addition, we have received information which indicates a dramatic increase in the number of utility customers who, for the first time, sought financial assistance through the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)," Gaw said.

"We hope that interested consumers and those groups that work with those in need of financial assistance during the winter heating season will take this opportunity to attend the public meeting and give us their views," stated Task Force Co-Chair Warren Wood. "It is vital that we receive information from those affected by winter heating bills so that we can effectively evaluate the Commission's current Cold Weather Rule and determine whether any changes should be proposed to the Commission," added Wood.

Established in 1977, the Cold Weather Rule has helped more than 2 million needy Missourians maintain heat-related service during the winter. The Commission's order establishing the case and creating a task force noted: "While the Commission continues to closely monitor the Cold Weather Rule and its affect on Missouri consumers, the Commission has not substantially changed the provisions of the rule, on a permanent basis, since 1993. Given these facts, the Commission believes it is imperative that the rule be closely examined again to determine if it continues to adequately address consumer needs."

---0---